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SERMON DLXXXVI.

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JOY IN GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." ROM. v. 11.

THERE is a remarkable peculiarity in Paul's disposition. To him is entrusted the charge of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles; but he is not the stern religionist, the fierce sectary we might have been led to suppose from the relations which he had previously sustained to Judaism. He is the decided, yet liberal—the devoted, yet amiable Christian. Thwarted in his movements, yet he is not despondent. Exposed to persecution, yet he is not embittered in his feelings. Doomed to suffer, he does not complain. Threatened with bonds and imprisonments, neither the prospective loss of liberty nor of life can shake his firmness or repress his spiritual joys. He ever rejoices in the hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but joy and triumph pervade the very heart of his trials.

Yes, brethren, if you would witness an embodied illustration of the blessed power of our holy religion, look into that gloomy dungeon. See there a man who might have been honored by his nation, had he not become a Christian; who might have enjoyed domestic comforts, lettered ease and distinction, an unmolested course, a peaceful old age, had he not

given up all for Christ. But is he a haggard, wretched man? Do we hear any regrets from his lips for having espoused the new faith? O no; he is very joyful in the God of his salvation. Listen to the praises with which his dungeon resounds. Ponder the exhortation sent to all his brethren—"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

Singular, and aside from Revelation, inexplicable circumstance, that a man so sorely tried, should have derived his only joy from an invisible, incomprehensible source! Not so did the imprisoned Socrates or condemned Seneca rejoice: not so did the priests of the grove, or the philosophers of the porch, rejoice: not so does human nature joy in God.

Yet *it is strange* that man should not seek his chief happiness in the Author of his being. Has not the soul been formed for the enjoyment of its Maker? Does not its irrepressible desire for joy indicate the original purpose of its being! But who does not know that nothing of earth's mould can satisfy its boundless aspirations? What is that word joy to the greater proportion of men? They know it not. Even their so-called pleasures are stolen, hurried, frantic, securing to their souls only some new anguish for the morrow. Despairing of happiness on earth, I doubt not that men in general would be amply content could they only keep the ordinary miseries of life in abeyance.

We are wont to speak of vice and crime, of disease and death, in proof of man's depravity. I want no other than the fact asserted by Scripture and corroborated by the history of our race, that man seeks his happiness away from God. Surely there is something awfully, fatally wrong in the internal condition of his very being, if the soul of man does not as naturally turn to its Maker as the needle to the pole. Cast your eye over this vast moral system. It was originally pronounced good by its Author. So glorious a Being could have proposed no other end in his creation, than fulness and perpetuity of joy. If it were not now essentially deranged, the world of mankind would be advancing in its cycles of holy happiness around the throne of unsullied blessedness, with the harmony and celerity, with which the planets move on in their majestic orbits around the source of material light. Joy and gladness would be found therein; thanksgiving and the voice of melody surpassing the symphonious hallelujahs of heaven, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

Until man, then, shall be led to seek his happiness in God, not only must he be in pursuit of shadows, but be defeating the true and ultimate purpose of his being.

But how shall he be brought to joy in God? I need not ask, whether it would have been possible, had we been left to the dim light of nature, to look up to God as the source of joy. The Great Spirit of natural religion comes not within the definite purview of a finite mind. He is too retired and silent to influence our habitual emotions. Let us think of God as the omnipotent Creator, the beneficent Father of the universe. Man may not fail to be wrapt in admiration as he casts his eye over the beauty and brightness of creation. He may be inclined to adore the unseen source of all things when he contemplates the evidences of the divine skill and goodness, which encompass him as the effulgence of the noon; but when the thunders utter their voices, and the cloud surcharged with the element of death approaches nearer and yet nearer, shall not fear and trembling take hold on him? He may think that God is good; love to expatiate on the evidences of his overflowing goodness, but, ah! has he not sinned? If, notwithstanding, he dreams of peace with God, is not his joy delusion? Could he even hope, if he did not regard the divine goodness irrespective of the holiness, and the truth, and the justice of the almighty Father? The wiser heathen thought that God was good; but "how can man be just with God?" was their natural enquiry. Nay, what is the divine goodness, philosophically considered, but one aspect of that holiness which blights the purity of angels, and regards sin, even in its most impalpable state, with abhorrence? What is the divine goodness but that all-pervading feeling of God's mighty heart, which leads him to promote the highest happiness of his moral universe by at once rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked? The government of God, because he is infinitely good, has high and holy ends, which necessarily forbid impunity to sin, and can in no wise be answered by either repentance, confession, or amendment. The ends of human government cannot: how much less the divine. Commit a crime, and you have necessarily incurred the penalty of civil law; and upon the same principles of good and righteous government, *sin*, and you have engaged in a fearful controversy with the almighty Ruler of the universe. It is in vain to say that your conviction of God's goodness fortifies your heart against all prognostications of evil. If you *feel* that you have sinned, (and how can you repress the conviction?) you must know that you enjoy no harmonious alliance with your Maker and Judge. Mark me! I am not arguing the point whether, in the midst of your sins and worldly pursuits, you may not generally be at ease; whether, by sophistry or sensuality you may not fortify your heart with an imperturbable apathy as respects your relations to God; but whether you joy in God

as the Originator, and Controller, and Disposer of your being? Even admitting that you are seldom or never troubled in your mind, that you carry with you a light heart, this is not the point. The question is, Is God the source and centre of your joys? Have you no fear of him when you think that he may be strict to mark iniquity? Can you commit yourself with conscious and joyous safety to his supreme disposal? I care not how erroneous the speculative views which one may entertain, or however moral he may be, only remove him from his free-thinking companions, or from the business and gaieties of life; let him lay his head upon that solitary, noiseless, pillow; let him think of himself, of this world, of death, of the prophetic analogies of the present to the future, and, so far from joying in that incomprehensible Being, he is troubled in all his thoughts. Amid that thick and appalling darkness which shrouds the throne of Almighty God, he can "find no hook to hang a hope on." He knows not what awaits him beyond the murky limits of the sepulchre: and it is this uncertainty that has stricken fear and trembling through many a glad heart in the world, and given redoubled poignancy to the pangs of woe; as it were, beclouding the brightness of day, and augmenting to a ten-fold degree the blackness of night.

I contend, that it is impossible to joy in God, unless he be revealed to man's distinct and intimate knowledge; unless we have been made to feel that he takes a deep and deathless interest in our welfare; has no pleasure in our death; pities us even as a father his children, and waits to be gracious; yea, that he may glorify his own name, and illustrate the stability of his throne, in our salvation.

Now, where can be gathered any satisfactory knowledge of God, except from the Word of God himself? Blessed Book! I no longer grope in the darkness of nature, nor am I embarrassed by the expedients of conscious guilt. I see the attributes of Jehovah in all their plenitude, and in all their harmony. I know that he can be just to the universe, just to the law, and just to himself, and yet pardon the sinner. Those very attributes which were once arrayed against me, are now leagued for my salvation. So far from regarding him with suspicion and dread, because he is immaculate in holiness, uncompromising in justice, inviolable in truth, I know that he loves my poor soul, and I can "go unto God, my exceeding joy." He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth.

This, in truth, is the great end of the Gospel revelation to man; to unveil to our adoring vision the blended perfections of a just and merciful God; to convince an erring and hell-

deserving world that we have a friend and father in God ; thus leading us to joy and rejoice in him.

Through Jesus Christ, the medium of this Revelation, we may regard him as a gracious Lawgiver, a pardoning God, a reconciled Father. As the sun reveals to us the beauties and sublimities of God's works, so does Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, unveil the glories of the Eternal Throne. Through him, all the attributes of Deity shine forth with vindicated and resplendent lustre, yet sweetly attempered to human vision. God, the great, the unsearchable One, is brought down to us in such an attitude that we cannot fail to comprehend. God, the infinite Spirit, is brought near to our hearts. We see him visiting the abodes of fallen man ; attending the sick ; sympathising with the afflicted ; mourning at the grave ; weeping over the incorrigibly impenitent ; yea, in the person of Jesus Christ, "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities."

Do you doubt it ? Think, whether it was possible for a holy and just God to restore the sinner to forfeited privileges without an expiation of his sins ; whether it be possible to account for the sacrifices of the heathen-world, if the human mind in all past ages did not virtually recognise the necessity of expiating a violated law by blood. Search the records of sacred history, and see whether all holy men did not look forward with anxious expectation to the coming of IMMANUEL, *God with us*. See whether all the sacrifices of the Old-Testament economy did not expressly point to an atonement which should be effected by some mysterious personage ? Whether all prophecies and all types are not most exactly, most wonderfully fulfilled in Him who died on Calvary's cross a sacrifice for the sin of the world ?

Tell us not that we make God a monster, who could be satisfied with nought but the life-blood of his own Son : "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Tell us not that God must have been fired with the most implacable hatred toward his own creatures, if no less a sacrifice could appease his anger : "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Dare not even to intimate that we divest God's nature of all that is amiable and lovely, and represent his laws to be written like Draco's in blood : "He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things." O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and goodness of God ! In that Cross, all the effulgence of Deity converges and centres. By that Cross all the "enmity" of man is slain.

"Lo, this is our God. We have waited for him and he will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." "Behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation."

Such are the declarations of Scripture in reference to the causes and effects of the Mediatorial scheme ; such the effusions of holy joy that burst from the lips of holy men of old. Have they met with no response from the hearts of believers ? Do you say that the professed followers of Jesus do not in general show that such are their views and emotions towards God ? Alas ! I know it. But such have never cordially received the atonement, or they would not still attempt to feed upon the beggarly elements of the world. How is it to be expected that they should joy in God who have never given themselves to him by faith and love ? whose only sense of religion is found, for the sake of their quiet security in sin, in a weekly round of forms and ceremonies, or who have backslidden from the ways of the Lord ? God himself says that he has become "a wilderness" unto such, "a land of darkness." But let us appeal to the true Christian. He is the only one competent to decide ; and I ask him whether he has not derived his most elevated and endearing views of God through the medium of Jesus Christ ? Whether it be not solely through Christ that he is enabled to joy in God as the Ruler of the universe, and to rejoice in the contemplation of his perfections ? Whether a sense of God's favor in Christ be not more to him than the riches and honors and pleasures of the world ? O where on earth shall the voice of celestial joy be heard but in the tabernacles of the righteous ? Truly, —to employ the beautifully poetic language of Scripture, "The joy of the Lord is their strength."

Or let us summon in testimony the new-born soul. You were transfixed with the arrows of remorse and dread. You wandered about, vainly seeking peace for your soul. There seemed no deliverance from that yawning abyss of fiery wrath. You were on the verge of despair, when lo ! God shined into your mind to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of himself in the face of Jesus Christ ;" and then it was that the tear was wiped away from your flowing eyes, and that your heart leaped for joy, and your tongue broke forth in rapturous sonnets !

Or, we might transport you to the bed of death. See there the dying Christian ! Why does he not flinch from the king of terrors ? why can he think of the dissolution of his earthly house, and take his last look of all that was once so dear

to him, without regret? what is it that fortifies, elevates, entrances his parting spirit? O it is the remembrance that comes over his heart like the distant music of the blessed, that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; it is the deathless conviction of his soul that God, even his own God in Christ, will never leave, and never forsake him.

Will it be said that such emotions of joy are not confined to those who maintain the atonement of Christ? I am aware that men have been indifferent to death; or that they have expressed a willingness to die; or thought that they were at peace with God; but the records of men tell not of one having died *rejoicing in God*, save the self-renouncing follower of the crucified Jesus. Nor is it possible that any other should. When the world is receding, and eternity with its dread realities is breaking upon my naked spirit, can I peacefully think of that holy Being before whom I am shortly to appear, if I do not *know* that my sins are pardoned? Oh! as I am about to launch upon that dread, unknown futurity, do I not need assurance that I shall not be lost? Whose voice can allay the dark forebodings of my guilty soul? On whose arm can my trembling spirit lean as I enter that fearful passage, never to return? "None but Christ!" "None but Christ!" was the exclamation of a dying martyr; it has found a sweet response in the dying lips of thousands of God's people; and when I think of the evidence which has been afforded to us in his death that God loves us with a quenchless love; that all his precious promises are yea and amen in Christ; that there is no reason why we should distrust his favor, and every reason why we should most cheerfully trust in his mercy and grace, I feel that Christ should be *all our desire*, as he must be, if we are ever saved, *our only salvation*. Nay, how can we be assured, that God is not *now our enemy*, short of the evidence of his grace and mercy which has been presented to us in the expiatory offering of his Son?

Hear the great Apostle.—(And his testimony is surely not to be undervalued—he could not have changed his religion on shadowy grounds; could not have been so weak as to expose himself to poverty, and contempt, and toil, and persecution, for the sake of a poor young man who had been crucified at Jerusalem, if that form had not shrouded Divinity, and that Cross had not been erected for the interests of the universe. His, we apprehend, was too strong an intellect to build his hopes for eternity on hay and stubble; and, if we accede to him the gift of inspiration, his was too intimate an acquaintance with God's will to admit of his being deceived as to the grounds of the Divine favor towards man.)—What

was it then that led him to embrace Christianity? The atonement. What animated him to preach the gospel despite of erudite scorn, or of vulgar ridicule? The atonement. What sustained him amid his perils and trials, and enabled him ever to joy in God? The atonement. "We joy in God"—through what medium? the works of his hand? the reason with which he has endowed us? the creatures whom he hath formed? because all nature so brightly symbolizes his perfections? because the air we breathe is so refreshing, and the sun that warms us is so glorious, and our faculties of mental and moral achievement are so sublime? Ah, had man not fallen, no other revelation would have been needed than reason, nor scriptures than the creation; no other incitements to praise and joy in God than the unnumbered blessings which crowd around his path. But listen to Paul, the pardoned sinner: "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Why? because he has delivered us from traditions of the elders? because he so beautifully expounded the law? because he embodied in himself both precept and example, and died in attestation of the truth of his doctrines? O no; Paul knew in whom he had believed—knew that he was not a mere man like himself—simply another prophet sent of God. He knew that no creature could secure to him, a sinner, the favor of a holy God. "We joy in God through our LORD Jesus Christ by whom we have received *the atonement*."

The atonement is the grand source and medium of the Christian's joy in God, from the hour of his conversion to the last moment of expiring nature—joy in his perfections, his creation, his providence, his purposes. It is not that he has given us a religion which pours a flood of light on immortality, and stamps shame and confusion on all other religious systems; not that it has ameliorated man's condition, advanced science and art, diffused the blessings of liberty and knowledge; not that it expands and energizes the intellect, purifies and ennobles the heart, or fosters the sweet charities of life,—*it is that while we were yet enemies to God, Christ died for us.*

Speak we of the perfections of God? it is well to refer to their embodied exemplification in the character of Christ; or of duty, to him who esteemed it his meat and his drink to do the will of his father; or of wisdom, to the teachings of him who spoke as never man spoke; or of virtue and benevolence, to the loveliness of his spotless example;—so did Paul. But speak we of the only ground of our hope and joy in God, it is the atonement. Would we joy in God? to that mysterious mount must we repair—on the blood-dyed arms of that cross hang our faith. O mystery of mysteries! that our joy in God

should have been purchased by the blood of his only begotten and well beloved Son !

We see, then, the position that Jesus Christ maintains in the system of revealed truth. To him every Mosaical institution referred ; of him the Seers of Israel prophesied ; to him the expectation of the world was directed. And now every proof of a divine revelation centres in his death ; every doctrine for our practical belief springs from his atoning mediation ; every argument to the conscience of the sinner is bathed in his blood ; every motive to our love, and gratitude, and joy in God emanates from his cross. Without him, we have no such knowledge of God as we need ; no access to the mercy seat ; no assurance of divine acceptance ; no hope of a blessed immortality. Without him there is no deliverance from the condemnation of a righteous law ; no escape from the vengeance of an offended God.

Why then this reluctance to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ ? Why this effort to degrade his rank, or to change the nature of his death ? Beware, my hearers, how you listen to the suggestions of the carnal mind, unless you are prepared to renounce "the faith once delivered unto the saints." I am not inducing an unnecessary caution. My life on it, CHRIST is ALL, or CHRISTIANITY is NOTHING. Take away Jesus, and our religion is a *headless trunk* !

But what reason have you, it may be asked, for believing Christianity to be true ? I need not refer to historical and critical evidences, though they cluster around the Bible, like sunbeams, pointing out to us the high source of this marvellous light. They are all insufficient, nothing worth, unless this gospel has a moral adaptation to our lost condition. What reason have I for belief ? You might as well have asked, what reason has yonder wretch for regarding you as his friend and benefactor, if at the expense of great sacrifices, you have relieved his miseries, and raised him to affluence and comfort.

Has not Christ made an atonement for my sins ? has he not introduced me to an intimate and endearing friendship with God ? Do I not owe to him all my hopes of pardon, purity, and eternal life ? Believe the Gospel ? How can I help believing it, when it is the very gift which, as a poor, lost sinner, I most urgently need ? Believe it ? I should be lost to common sense if I did not believe it, when it is the only thing in the wide world that can dispel my fears and relieve the yearnings of my soul. I should justify against myself the charge of *ineffable folly*, if, by disbelief, I spurn God's favor and trifle with my deathless interests. Ah, you must prove to me that man is not a sinner, has no wants, no woes, no sins, no sufferings, no dread forebodings of what

may come after he has "shuffled off this mortal coil," before we can be induced to reject the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement. A firm, cordial belief in God through Jesus Christ, infinitely transcends any system or object that the world may command or value. It affords the only position, from which, sinful man may deduce the sublimated conclusion, "I know that this is but the infancy of an immortal existence; that my sins are pardoned; that God is my portion and heaven my final home." It places man on the only ground where he is truly independent of all the frowns or favors of the world; where joy springs from sorrow, and blessings from afflictions; where poverty becomes imperishable wealth, and obscurity undecaying honor; where life awakens from the sleep of death, and "beauty immortal" arises from the corruption of the tomb.

What, then, does the infidel mean? See the pious poor, from whom he would wrest their only hope; the widow, from whom he would snatch her last resource; the orphan, whom he would turn out to wander at random in a forsaken world; the dying, whom he would reduce to despair! Look over the length and breadth of our world, which we fondly trust may yet be reclaimed from sin and misery; but which *he* would cover with an eternal pall! Talk not to me of charity, when the hopes of a dying world are at stake. Infidel! I arraign thee as man's direst foe. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I solemnly charge upon thee the work of death and damnation!

But what is it that the impenitent sinner means? You do not reject the gospel, and yet you do not believe. You shudder at the infidel's guilt, and yet you have not availed yourself of the believer's privileges. You are not happy—you know you are not; or if, at any time, you imagine yourself so, why is it? Simply because you have added to your stores or your laurels, and gathered around you the means of selfish gratification. Yet what boots it that you enjoy the things of earth? Ah, fill high the Samian bowl; dig deep the mines of gold, or climb the steep of fame; "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Believe me, your pleasures are as "the crackling of thorns under a pot." You are strangers to joy in God. You have never received the atonement. Though Jesus has been preached unto you, and his servants have often plead with you, by his cross and passion, by his bloody sweat and agony, to be reconciled to God; though, in an ordinance of his own appointment, Christ has "evidently been set forth crucified" before you, and by his Word and Spirit is now knocking at the door of your hearts with weeping entreaties, still you have not re-

ceived the atonement. Am I wrong? Why, then, were you not with his disciples when so lately they gathered round the table of their dying Lord? Why are you not this day all devotedness to the honor of his name and the advancement of his cause? Why is it, that should you be called to die this night, your Christian friends would gather around your death-bed in anguish of spirit, and plead with God to have *mercy upon you*, lest you should die without hope? Alas! poor soul! if you have never received the atonement—never embraced Christ as he is offered to you in the gospel—you are still in your sins, and in danger of dying in your sins; still out of Christ, and *in danger of the judgment!*

S E R M O N DLXXXVII.

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MERCY REJOICETH AGAINST JUDGMENT.

“And mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

JAMES ii. 17.

FAR in the Empyrean heights, above the rolling spheres, and whither the thoughts of mortals find it difficult to climb, is a place called the **THIRD HEAVEN**, or the **HEAVEN OF HEAVENS**. In that world is the **Eternal City**, the central seat of the great King. In the midst of the city, conspicuous, and under the wide-arching canopy above, is a throne, all resplendent with celestial glories, standing on a pavement of sapphire, and surrounded with a rainbow. On that throne sits the **Ancient of Days**, the **Infinite**, the **Creator and Ruler** of all worlds, and their final Judge. Not that he is limited to that place: for no boundaries of space can contain him. He fills immensity with his presence. But there, he reveals himself in peculiar glory. There, amidst attending angels, the first-born sons of light,—the thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, that bow around him, and wait his pleasure,—he holds the grand central court of his universal

kingdom, issuing thence his mandates and decisions, and dispensing thence his recompenses of justice and of love.

Amidst the ever-shifting glories of the place, a scene of unwonted interest presents itself. Before the throne appears a personage of shining character, clothed in robes of light, dignified, celestial in her aspect, yet with bended knee, and with a tear upon her cheek. She appears there in supplication; not for herself, but for others; an intercessor for offenders.

Heaven pauses in its movements, at the spectacle. Its songs are suspended. The attention of all the circling throngs is directed to her. As they wait, she speaks, and the opening of her plea is thus: Sire Eternal! the only Being self-existing, and from whom all other beings come, all-worthy! admit thy humble creature's utterance. Down through many a system of suns and planets, wheeling their mighty courses in the illimitable void; in far distant space beneath thy feet, is a speck of dust, not seen by any created eye from these heights. On that speck dwells a creature of humble grade, composed of dust himself in part, yet having a spark of intellectual being—a germ of immortality. That creature, though formed but last of all thy works, has sinned. O Sovereign of the universe! suffer a plea to be presented for his pardon!

While these words were being uttered, and the ranks of the heavenly hosts drew closer around, in still more eager attention, and amidst the deeper silence that prevailed, another personage appeared, and approached the throne. She was shining like the former, of heavenly mein, yet different in her aspect. She stood erect, and no tear was on her face. She never wept. She came, as the other ceased, to present a counter plea. Sovereign Judge! she said, the Just, the True! how can Mercy's plea be granted? (for Mercy was the name the former bore.) Justice has claims—claims which cannot be dispensed with. Man—that creature man—having sinned, must meet the recompenses due to sin. How can Justice be turned aside from her right?

Mercy interposed, in her beseeching tones; But man is frail, a creature of flesh and ignorance, a creature of a day; his being is obscure—among the smallest of the rational productions of the Creator's hands. His whole race, and the very globe they inhabit, would scarce be missed, were they blotted from existence. They are not so much as a single leaf of a flower-stalk, in the great garden of the Creator's works; not so much as a mote that flits in the sun-beam, to the milky-way. May not this creature be forgiven? May not the Infinite show compassion to so frail an existence as this? Will it shake the stability, and order, and happiness of other

worlds, to relax the claims of justice in behalf of so frail an existence as this? He is as nothing compared to Thee, O SOVEREIGN JUDGE! Yet his happiness is much to him. Turn from him the tokens of thy displeasure, and let him live.

Justice again presents her counter-plea. True, she says, compared with some other orders of being, man is frail, a creature of a day, ignorant and fleshly. Yet is he not beneath the notice of a moral Governor. Yet is he an appropriate subject of law. His nature places him in the rank of moral existences; with the power of distinguishing good from evil—right from wrong. He is endowed with the power of knowing his Creator—the Author and Sustainer of his being, with the power of knowing the law imposed upon him—of perceiving its equity and goodness; with a conscience placed within him, admonishing him, and urging him to duty. And to all this has been added much express instruction; the light of counsel, of warning, and of entreaty, being poured around him from the first hour of his creation. Did he not, at the very opening of his being, and amidst Eden's bowers and fruits, the gift of love, and emblem of heaven—did he not hear the Creator's voice? And has it not followed him through the whole course of his existence to bless him, had he not resisted it? And his frailty—does it not show itself mainly in virtue's cause? He is strong to do evil? He is strong in devices, and in the execution of purposes, for his own gratification. He is strong in contending with his brother; in wrongs and oppressions often; in shedding his brother's blood on the battle-field. In his conflicts, the ground often trembles beneath his tread. The very earth seems to reel under the shock of his contending hosts; and the very sun is darkened by the smoke and dust arising from his murderous strife. He is strong, often, in his impiety against the heavens. What forms of offence has he not practiced? Insignificant, in himself, he may, indeed, be, compared with some other beings: yet have not his crimes given him consequence? This creature man has dared to set at naught the authority of the Eternal Creator of the universe, and the universal King. He has knowingly transgressed, and continued to transgress. In defiance of the Almighty's voice, he plucked, he ate, of the forbidden tree. In defiance of that voice still, he walks in the sight of his own eyes, and after the desires of his own heart. With the Law in his hand—the Law of universal love—he has disregarded alike its requisitions and its threatenings, and filled the world with idolatry and irreligion, with corruption and crime. To the voice that would reclaim him, he is like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmers,

charming never so wisely. And are the claims of justice, continues this personage, on such a creature as this, of a slight or doubtful character? Must he not be judged according to the Law he has broken? according to his knowledge of that Law? according to his ability to keep or violate its precepts? Is it not right that he should be treated according to his moral character and conduct? that he be made to eat of the fruit of his own ways, and to be filled with his own devices? Is it not incumbent on the infinite Ruler of the universe to treat him thus? Has not the Law threatened death to the transgressor? and is not this a righteous penalty—demanded by truth and equity? And man having sinned, is there hence any thing for him but to die the death?

So spake Justice before the throne. And the plea seemed conclusive. What flaw can be discovered in the reasoning, or unsoundness in the premises on which it is based?

But Mercy, intent on her purpose, still finds an argument to urge in reply. Is not death, she says—the death threatened—an evil of too great magnitude to be inflicted? Can any creature endure it? Will the Infinite allow himself to award to any creature, however far from righteousness, so dreadful a doom? Art not Thou, O Sovereign of the universe, a Being of Mercy? Hast thou not revealed thyself thus to all creatures? Is not mercy one of thy chief glories? Will thou not, then, show thyself merciful to man? Exact not of him the great penalty of thy law. Glorify the attribute of thy mercy in his pardon. Let all the angels see it. Let all the universe see it, and render Thee corresponding praise. Pardon, O pardon thy creature man!

To which Justice rejoined: the threatened punishment is no more than sin deserves. If it is great, it is only so because sin is a great evil; is committed against a great, an infinitely perfect and infinitely glorious God; is committed against an infinitely perfect and glorious law; and against boundless riches of goodness,—infinite, eternal, and unceasing love. Is not crime proportioned to the Being offended, and to obligations violated? And should not punishment bear a correspondence to the crime committed? What other rule can be found for punishment, but the enormity of the sin for which the punishment is inflicted? Then it must be great, for the sin is great. Moreover, the punishment, great as it may be, grows out of the very sin committed, as its natural consequence. A state of sin, when the sinner is abandoned to his condition, is itself death. It is the extinction of good within him, and the extinction of hope. It is the kindling up of evil passions, and the awakening of a sense of guilt, and fore

boding and terror. This, says Justice, is but the natural fruit of sin. And is it too much, that the sinner shall eat of the fruit of his own way? that he shall be left to reap what he has himself sown? If he render himself unfit for communion with God, is it too much if he be denied that communion? if he provoke God's frown, is it too much if he be left to feel that frown? If he take fire into his soul, can he complain if he be left to feel it burning there?

But further Justice pleads: Has not the Infinite declared that sin shall be thus punished? Has not the word gone forth from thy lips, O Eternal Sovereign! that "the wages of sin is death:" that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die?" Hast thou not uttered this from thy throne, and incorporated it into thy law for the government of the universe? Has not every angel heard it? And has it not gone forth to all worlds? Has it not rolled and reverberated through the arches of these heavens, for the instruction and warning of every creature, and as one of the grand truths for the guard of the moral universe—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die?" Is not this, in part, an exponent of the moral feelings, the moral nature of God? How, then, shall thy word be disregarded? How *can* the utterances of thy lips be set aside? Hath the Infinite *said*, and shall he not *do*? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? What will angels say, if the word of the Eternal be broken? What will the universe say? Who will credit again the message that cometh forth from the throne? Who will believe again that Jehovah is true? Who again will tremble at his threatening, or fear to sin? Man pardoned, his sin unpunished, himself treated with favor in violation of the Law, the foundations of government are destroyed; the eternal throne is dishonored; the veracity of the Infinite is broken; the universe as the tidings extend, will lose their confidence in their King, and rebellion and confusion will be encouraged in every world. If one sinner may escape a righteous recompense, and that in violation of a solemnly uttered sentence, then may another, and another; and the government of the Infinite, the eternal Supreme, is undermined, and passes away for ever!

So Justice reasoned again. And Heaven saw and felt the cogency of her plea. If the INFINITE, she says, will have a government, he must have a law. And if he will maintain his government, he must adhere to his law, and carry out in practice the declared recompenses of good and of evil, as cases arise requiring them. He must honor his law; he must honor his throne; he must maintain his own veracity. "A God of truth, and without iniquity," it is declared of him, "just and right is he." And he must *show* himself thus, in order that the universe may rest in peace and quietness under the shadow of

his wings; move on in safety, and rejoice in his dominion. Man—Justice repeats—cannot be pardoned. He has sinned; and he must feel the consequences of his sin. To release him, would be a wrong done to every holy being in existence. It would render the standing of every other being less secure. Jehovah's treatment involves fundamental principles—principles underlying the universal whole. And those principles violated in his case, the universal whole must feel the deranging influence.

Man, then, must die. Even Mercy can say no more. Even she herself is convinced that favor to him would be cruelty to the whole universe besides. She bows in silence, though still sorrowing at the destruction which awaits him. Man is bound, and delivered over to the executioner's power, and the sword of justice is lifted over him.

At this awful moment, another scene arrests attention. From the light inaccessible which surrounds the throne, and stretches far back in its insufferable brightness—a light before which ten thousand suns, condensed into one, would cease to shine and become black as sackcloth of hair; from that light there comes forth a PERSONAGE, unseen before, partaker in the Godhead. With "the Ancient of days" he had been for ever, "as one brought up with him:" and "his delights had been with the sons of men." With infinite pity, he approaches the eternal Sire, and says: On me be the wrong of Man. On me, sovereign Judge! place man's burden. Of me let Justice exact her utmost claims on man's account. I my life will give for his; will drink the bitter draught prepared for him. On me the violated law shall have its course. By me, descending to the world of sin, and dwelling in flesh like its lost inhabitants, and yielding up my life a sacrifice to thee, in their behalf, shall law be honored, and veracity and equity sustained, and man, accepting the proffered favor, shall live.

Deep silence was in heaven. Rapt wonder and awe held its circling throngs. The Eternal Sire assented to the Son. A light, a glory shone, such as heaven itself had not before seen. Mercy and Justice bowed together before the throne, and bowed together before the wondrous Deliverer, and owned him for their Lord. Justice herself wept: (she never wept before). Her claims were met, and in a way that made even her heart relent. And suddenly, bursting from all the lips of the blessed, there went up a song, in strains like the voice of many waters, and like mighty thunderings, and harpers harping with their harps, saying, Alleluia! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" "A Just God, and a Savior!" "Mercy and Truth are

met together : Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other !”

Thus “MERCY REJOICETH AGAINST JUDGMENT.”

But the vision presents one feature more. Man must hear what Heaven has devised in his behalf. On the Great Messenger, in his errand to the world, Mercy and Justice are both attendants : Mercy pleased to see the work for which her spirit sighed go forward, and Justice pleased to see no jot or tittle of her claims abated.

Mercy, in the earth, shows herself still allied to heaven. Everywhere she speaks soothingly to human woe. Everywhere she calls men to avail themselves of the great salvation. She leaves no place where human beings are to be found, unvisited. She goes even into loathsome dungeons, and dens of crime and misery, pointing the victims of sin to Him who saves the lost. She is on the embattled plain, pleading with the contending hosts to stay their vengeful strife, and both, repenting of their own sins, to bow in unison before the Prince of peace. She is with the highwayman on the land, and the pirate on the seas, and the evil-doer in every place, warning against the nefarious deeds which drag down their perpetrators to the lake of fire, and bidding them turn, and “flee from the wrath to come.” She is in every chamber of sickness, and abode of sorrow, speaking of Him who assuages pain, and wipes the mourner’s tears, and prepares mansions where sorrow does not come. She is with man under all visitations of judgment and correction, whispering in his ear the divine instruction they are intended to convey, and urging obedience to their monitions. She accompanies every message of the gospel, with a heart in deep sympathy with every call, with every argument of persuasion, with every appeal. She rejoiceth over every sinner that repenteth. She witnesses, with throbbing delight, the spreading, rising kingdom of redemption : and will stand, at last, at the right hand of the Judge, beholding the grand result, in multitudes which no man can number, gathered from every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, into the realms of glory ; the grand result of new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, compared with which “the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind ;” the grand result, accompanied with the loud acclaim of triumph : the universe bursting forth in rapturous praise : “He hath done all things well !” “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

So Mercy shall see her desire accomplished. While Justice, through all this scene by her side, is not less pleased to see her own claims all met. No truth is sacrificed. No bright attribute of Jehovah is tarnished. No principle of equity and good government is violated, or weakened. On the contrary, all is strengthened. Even Justice herself never appeared in such brightness before, never received such honor before, as is reflected back upon her from the wondrous work of redeeming love. Mercy triumphs to the advantage of her very rival, as well as of herself, and the dying race of man.

I see, says the considerate man, where my hope of eternal life, and the hope of my race, must begin. Not in justice. If justice carries through her claim upon us, she cuts us off, and sends us to endless death. Not in mercy, simply and alone considered. Mercy has no plea strong enough to prevail in behalf of a sinner like man. If she should screen man, at the expense of justice, the very throne of the Eternal would be sullied, and his character tarnished, and his universal dominion shaken and destroyed. Our hope of eternal life must begin in the interposition of the Son of God. When I hear a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, but a body hast thou prepared me: Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O God!" then I look up, and begin to see how a sinner may live. When I read the gracious declaration of a later time, that God has "so loved the world, that he has given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" then I see how a sinner can live. When I turn my eye to Calvary, and behold there the great VICTIM, groaning, bleeding, dying, amidst the darkened heavens, and rending rocks, and quaking earth, and under the hidings of the Father's face, forcing from him the cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and learn elsewhere the cause of this to be, that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,"—that "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" then I see how a sinner can live.

"Oh! the sweet wonders of that cross,
Where Christ, the Saviour, lov'd and died:
Her noblest life my spirit draws,
From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

I learn hence, says the devout Christian, my obligation. I am at the communion-table. This is not an empty ceremony. It is not a mere fraternal act, or token of kindred feeling among the participants. This, indeed, it is: but it is also much more. It is a memorial of the Son of God, in whom

new foundations for communion are laid. It is a memorial of him, in that great hour, when he offered himself in heaven as man's Redeemer. It is a memorial of him in that great hour, when he came to execute the purpose of his love :—when first he appeared in the flesh, and angelic voices sung, "Glory to God in the highest ; and on earth peace, good will to men !" and when afterward, on Calvary, "he, through the eternal Spirit, offered up himself without spot to God," for the life of the world. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God !" "Herein is love : not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This communion is a memorial of him now in heaven, preparing a place for his chosen, that they may, after a little while, be with him there for ever. Here I think on his humiliation in leaving the abodes of light for this dark world. Here I think on his toils, his pains, his death, the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear ; the untold agonies of Gethsemane, and the still deeper woes of Calvary, when his spirit sank beneath its mighty load, uncheered with the Father's love : and here I think on his expiring groan, when the heavens were hung in mourning, and earth quaked to her centre, in sympathy with the great sufferer. And now what shall I render for the Father's love ? And what shall I render to the eternal Son, for his interposing mercy in my behalf ? O how pregnant with meaning is the voice of inspiration, "Ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God, in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Surely my bonds are infinite, and indissoluble. "The love of Christ constraineth me." May I never forget that I am purchased. May I never forget the price paid for me. May I live answerable to the immortal hopes thus open before me, and before my needy race. O God ! seal me for thine ; and make me faithfully, unceasingly, eternally thine !

Let no man hope for heaven without a Saviour. Justice cannot save you. She can only condemn. Mercy, in itself alone, cannot save you. She has no power to remove the condemnation of the law, or to wash the spirit and make it meet for heaven. There is no hope, but in the Son of God. As he himself says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And as the apostle says, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved ;" "who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." Let every one see here the only ground of hope. "He that hath the Son of God, hath life. He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." "But the wrath of

God abideth on him." Whosoever thou art, thou needest this salvation. Come, then, to Him who bestows it, and live ! Come, renouncing every other ground of hope. Come, confessing that Justice cannot save you ; that Mercy alone cannot save you ; that there is no created power in the heights or depths that can reach your case. Come, making Christ your all, believing in him, following him, obeying him. Come, and devote yourself to him, and live to him. Then you shall be saved. Under his grace, sin will disappear from your soul. Forgiveness shall flow to you as a river. And, when you have filled up the measure of service required of you here, he will take you to those glorious empyrean heights where he reigns, and there bless you with his favor for ever.

WHAT SO NEEDFUL FOR US AS A PLACE IN CHRIST'S REMEMBRANCE ?

Let me live in daily remembrance of Him who loved me, and gave himself for me ; and when my last hour is come—when skill is baffled, and friends can only weep around my couch, and coldness is creeping through my frame, and the light of life leaving my eyes, and I feel myself throttled by the "King of Terrors," and know that in a moment I must part with earth, and go down alone into the dark grave, never more to return—then, *Lord, remember me.*

And when the sepulchres are bursting, and the dead are starting to life at the sound of the archangel's trump, and the judgment is set, and the books are opened, and the Judge comes forth, clothed with righteousness and armed with omnipotence ; and I find myself of the number of those who, according to their works, are to be allotted to happiness or woe forever ; and *feel myself to be a sinner*, without the power to escape or the tongue to speak—O ! then, *remember me !*

Through life's pilgrimage, all I ask is, a place in *thy remembrance* ; and in the hour of death, though the world forget me, and friends desert me, and my bed be made in poverty, and my body racked by pain, give me but thy faintest smile, and I *die happy !*—*Dr. Dickinson.*

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